

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Peter F. Tamborello House

**OWNERS:** Ronald D. Powell, Jr

**APPLICANTS:** Same as Owner

**LOCATION:** 1813 Gentry Street, Houston, Texas, 77009 –  
Historic Near Northside

**AGENDA ITEM:** C

**HPO FILE NO.:** 18L325

**DATE ACCEPTED:** DEC-12-2018

**HAHC HEARING:** DEC-12-2018

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 9, Block 34, A.C. Allen Addition, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a one-story residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Peter F. Tamborello House is a c.1916, one-story frame, vernacular house with Colonial Revival and Folk Victorian-inspired detailing in the section of Houston's historic Fifth Ward that came to be known as the Near Northside. The house is typical of the small working-class houses found not only in the Fifth Ward, but also in Houston's historic First and Sixth wards. There were five total owners of the property; Peter F. Tamborello, Marie Rodrigues, Juanita and Maria Torres, Rosie Pena, and Ronald D. Powell, Jr. Powell, the fifth and current owner, bought the house in 2011. He is seeking a City of Houston landmark designation for the property.

The development of Near Northside and the homes popular in the area are closely connected to the importance of railroads in Houston's early history. In the late 1800s, many of the Near Northside's residents were railroad workers. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Southern Pacific Railroad shops were said to be the largest in the Southwest, employing some 5,000 workers and contributing greatly to the growth of the Fifth Ward. The recognizable wood trim detailing commonly seen in the neighborhood were relatively cost-effective to produce in factories and became easier for working-class families to access due to the railroad system.

Many early residents were immigrants of Irish, Italian and German descent. After World War II, the neighborhood became predominantly Hispanic, and still is today. The area still fortunately has some of the Victorian-era houses and cottages built by its early residents, but many of these homes do not have City of Houston historic designations.

The ownership history of 1813 Gentry mirrors the demographic shifts that occurred in Near Northside. The home was originally owned by an Italian working-class person, followed by several owners of Hispanic heritage. According to the Houston City Directory and the Harris County Tax Archives, the first owner of the property was Peter F. Tamborello, who was a painter at the Southern Pacific Shops, and later at Ford Motor Company.

The house is an example of vernacular residential design and is representative of the Near Northside's historic housing stock. The home's history reflects the neighborhood's development and evolution over 100 years.

The Peter F. Tamborello House at 1813 Gentry Street, Houston Texas, 77009 meets Criteria 1 and 4 for Landmark Designation

## **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

### *Near Northside*

Development in the Near Northside began in earnest after the Fifth Ward was formed in 1866 out of the sections of the First and Second wards north of Buffalo Bayou and east of White Oak Bayou. Houston's wards were established as political districts, each represented by elected aldermen. When Houston adopted a commission form of government in 1905, the political life of the wards ended, yet their names continue to be used to describe geographic areas of the inner city. The area commonly called the Fifth Ward today lies east of Maury Street and US 59/I-69, while the area west of Maury Street – the historic Fifth Ward – is known as the Near Northside.

The plat for the earliest subdivision in the Near Northside, the Ryon Addition, was filed on November 17, 1862. Ryon's boundaries were Maury Street on the east, Line Street on the south, Terry and Robertson streets on the west and Gaines Street on the north. The plat for the A.C. Allen Addition was filed shortly afterward, on December 30, 1862, and carved 65 blocks of varying sizes out of roughly 300 acres located north of Burnett Street. The A.C. Allen Addition ran north to Boundary Street, and from White Oak Bayou on the west to about Common Street on the east. The plat established several of the principal streets in today's Near Northside, including North Main (originally called Montgomery Road), Hogan and Quitman.

Early residents of Houston's Near Northside were working class; many were employed in the nearby railyards. Significant numbers of these early residents were Irish and German immigrants. With the decrease in rail traffic and growing suburban development, the area transitioned into a predominately Hispanic neighborhood, which it remains today.

The Near Northside contains one of Houston's most significant concentrations of Victorian residential architecture. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were built between 1880 and 1910, with Queen Anne and Folk Victorian styles predominating. The area also includes a number of bungalows from the early 20th century, with a scattering of later ranch style houses, and increasingly, 21<sup>st</sup> century townhouses.

### *A.C. Allen Addition*

The plat for the A.C. Allen Addition was filed by Charlotte Baldwin Allen (1805-1895) in 1862. Charlotte Allen was the wife of Augustus C. Allen (1806-1864), who along with his brother John Kirby Allen (1810-1838), founded the city of Houston in 1836 at the confluence of Buffalo and White Oak bayous.

Charlotte Baldwin was the daughter of Dr. Jonas Baldwin, founder and mayor of Baldwinsville, New York. She married Augustus Allen in May 1831 and followed her husband to Texas, as did other Allen and Baldwin family members. Charlotte and Augustus Allen separated in 1850; Augustus left Houston to conduct business and serve as a U.S. consul in Mexico. Augustus Allen signed over to Charlotte the bulk of his Houston businesses and properties, including unsold land he held in and around the city. In December 1862, Charlotte platted about 300 acres of that property as the A.C. Allen Addition. Charlotte Allen died in Houston on August 3, 1895, leaving an estate worth \$51,867.

## *Railroads*

Construction began on Houston's first railroad, the Houston and Texas Central, in 1853. Within a few years, a number of other railroads were building lines toward the city, and in 1856 Houston was named the hub of Texas' rail network by order of the state legislature. In 1861, Texas had around 470 miles of track; three quarters of the network passed through Houston. By 1889, the amount of trackage statewide had increased to more than 8,440 miles. Shortly after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 17 railroads operated in Houston. Many of the city's rail lines converged in the largely undeveloped area on the north side of Buffalo Bayou, opposite the business district and port, where the Southern Pacific Railroad built its expansive railyard and shops. The availability of jobs in the railyard spurred residential development in what is now the Near Northside, allowing railroad employees to live near their work.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Houston was calling itself the "Chicago of the South," a reference to its many rail connections. The 1903-04 Houston City Directory noted that, "Seventy-two passenger trains arrive and depart from Houston every 24 hours. Three times as many freight trains are operated in the city during the same time. No city south of St. Louis can show such a railway traffic as this." The city even adopted an official motto that referred to the rail lines: "Where Seventeen Railroads Meet the Sea." The combination of rail connections and the Port of Houston directly fueled the city's phenomenal 20<sup>th</sup> century growth.

## *Southern Pacific*

The Southern Pacific Transportation Company was founded as a land holding company in 1865 and later acquired the Central Pacific Railroad by lease. By 1900, the Southern Pacific had grown into a major railroad system that incorporated many smaller lines, including the Texas and New Orleans Railroad and Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railroad. As a result, Southern Pacific routes extended from New Orleans through El Paso across New Mexico and Arizona to Los Angeles. The railroad also operated lines throughout most of California, including San Francisco and Sacramento, and ran lines north to Portland, Oregon.

The now-demolished Southern Pacific repair shops and railyard in Houston's Near Northside were said to be the largest in the Southwest, employing some 5,000 workers during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The company-owned Southern Pacific Hospital (1911, now Thomas Street Clinic) still stands in the Near Northside. The railroad also had a significant presence in Downtown Houston with regional offices in the Southern Pacific Building (1911, now Bayou Lofts) on Franklin at Travis.

## *1813 GENTRY STREET*

There were five total owners of 1813 Gentry – Peter Frank Tamborello, Marie Rodrigues, Juanita and Maria Torres, Rosie Pena, and Ronald D. Powell, Jr., who bought the house in 2011 and is the current owner.

The 1917 Houston City Directory and Harris County Tax Archives show Peter (also Pete) Frank Tamborello as the first owner of the property. Peter was born on March 20, 1893 in Bessemer, Alabama to Italian parents, Frank Tamborello and Laura Joye. He married Annie Guarino in Houston on June 23, 1914. Anne Guarino was born on January 6, 1895 in Bessemer, Alabama to Italian parents Salvatore and Rosalia Guarino. Peter and Annie lived at 1813 Gentry with their two daughters, Loraine Ann and Sadie Dorothy. Peter was a painter for the Southern Pacific Shops, and later for Ford Motor Company. Peter passed away on August 24, 1965, and Annie died on May 5, 1986. Both are buried in Forest Park Cemetery.

The subsequent owners reflect the shifting demographics of the area from largely Italian, Irish and German families to the predominantly Hispanic neighborhood it became toward the end of World War II with the decline of rail traffic. For example, Marie Rodrigues became the new owner after Tamborello around 1955, followed by Juanita and Maria Torres in 1965, and Rosie Pena in 2008.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:**

### *ARCHITECTURAL STYLE*

The house is a one-story frame vernacular design with a hipped roof and lower cross gable with boxed eaves. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles. The interior brick chimney is on the left (south) side of the house. The house sits on a pier and beam foundation.

There is a partial-width, half-hipped porch with Victorian-inspired detailing. The asymmetrical front façade contains three bays. The first (left) bay contains one 1-over-1 sash window with a wood frame and sill. The second (central) bay contains a wood door centrally located within a wood frame, and a single light transom directly above the door. The lower portion of the third (left) bay contains one 1-over-1 sash window with a wood frame and sill. There is a simple ledge molding above the window. The third bay contains a front-facing gable with a single light transom window, and simple ledge molding at the top of the window.

### *RESTORATION HISTORY*

The current owner of the property Ronald D. Powell, Jr. purchased and rehabilitated the property in 2011 and maintained the historic aspects of the home. Prior to his purchase, the house had been converted into a duplex and a second entry door had been added on the front porch and the rear porch had been enclosed. Powell returned the house to its historic configuration by removing the second entry door and restoring the window. The existing windows were damaged beyond repair and were replaced with aluminum windows. The current owner rebuilt the porch with Victorian-inspired details, which reflect the style of the surrounding homes. In addition, the historic rear porch has been restored and Victorian-inspired details were added to match the front porch.

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*The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by the Historic Preservation Office, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*





## EXHIBIT A

### PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE

**1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE**

OCTOBER 2018 PHOTO - FRONT ELEVATION FACING GENTRY STREET





**PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE**

**1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE**

**2018 PHOTO – REAR ELEVATION**



**PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE**

**1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE**

**2017 PHOTO - FRONT ELEVATION FACING GENTRY STREET**





**PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE**

**1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE**

**2011 PHOTO – FRONT ELEVATION FACING GENTRY STREET**



**PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE**  
**1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE**  
**2011 PHOTO – REAR ELEVATION**





**PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE**

**1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE**

1965 PHOTO



# CITY OF HOUSTON

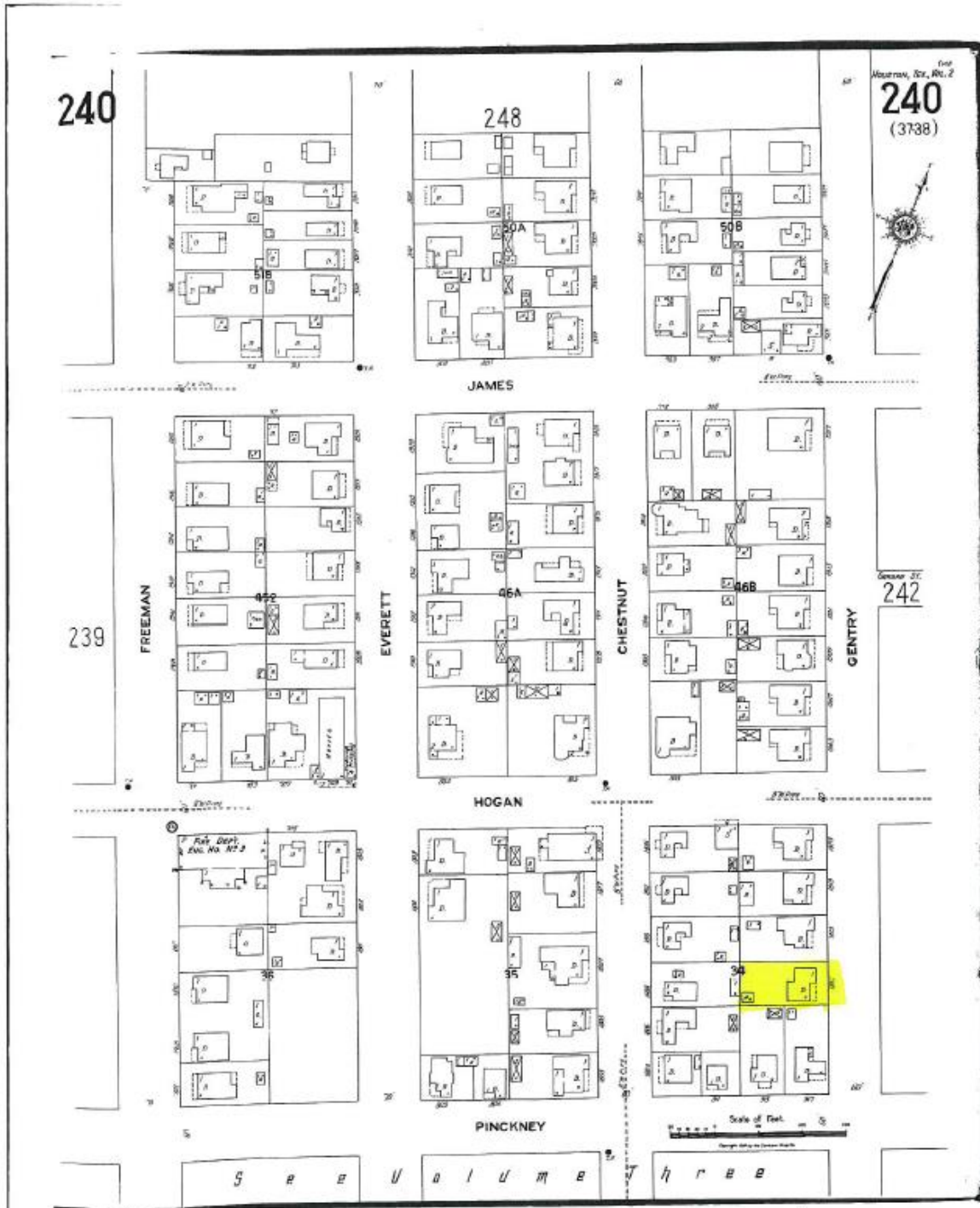
Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## EXHIBIT B SANBORN MAP

PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE

1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE





## EXHIBIT C HCAD MAP

PETER F. TAMBORELLO HOUSE

1813 GENTRY STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS, 77009 – HISTORIC NEAR NORTHSIDE

